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Letter dated 20 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the pleasure to present to you herewith the report on the work of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, covering the period from 1 November 2002 to 10 February 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ümit **Pamir**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 20 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Quarterly report on International Security Assistance Force operations for the period from 1 November 2002 to 10 February 2003, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001), 1413 (2002) and 1444 (2002)

Summary

Security circumstances in Kabul continued to improve during the reporting period. The calm and peaceful atmosphere in the city has consolidated further and no major incident has occurred since the night curfew was lifted on 3 November, for the first time since 1979. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan has nevertheless sustained both its own security activities and its fruitful coordination and cooperation with the Afghan security entities. ISAF personnel continue to enjoy a warm reception from the local community. Relations with the Afghan authorities are highly constructive.

The Government has been making progress towards addressing the fundamental problems facing the country, reforming the security sector and extending its authority to the provinces. It is essential that the secure and stable environment in Kabul is consolidated by means of greater international assistance through the central Government. This constitutes the final report by the Turkish leadership, as the joint German-Dutch leadership is scheduled to take over the ISAF command on 10 February.

I. Introduction

1. Security in Kabul and its surrounding areas continued to strengthen during the reporting period, without any major incidents. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan discharged its responsibilities as planned and sustained its security measures, its coordination and intelligence-sharing practices with the relevant Afghan authorities and its assistance activities in the local community, especially in the fields of education, health and urban infrastructure.

2. The ISAF Commander, Major General Hilmi Akin Zorlu has continued to take up the issues of police and army salaries and of the equipment requirements of the local police with both the senior Afghan leadership and the international community at large.

3. The Afghan Government has been seeking to forge a broad national consensus on the fundamental issues facing Afghanistan and to come to terms with the pressing need for security sector reform, particularly the establishment of a national army to serve the interests of the entire country. It is essential that the international community provides the central Government with substantial political, financial and technical support so as to prevent Afghanistan from succumbing once again to extremism and religious polarization.

4. Arrangements for a smooth transfer of the ISAF command from Turkey to the joint German-Dutch leadership have been completed, with staff from the current and future leaderships now consulting and working together to ensure that there are no gaps in ISAF operations. Having been involved in ISAF since its inception, Germany and the Netherlands are well qualified to sustain and build upon the Force's formidable track record in Kabul.

II. ISAF activities

A. General

5. ISAF operations continued as planned during the reporting period, with a sustained visibility and presence in the city. An average of 50 security patrols a day were conducted on a 24-hour basis, mostly on foot. Approximately two thirds of those patrols were conducted jointly with the Afghan police. Many random checkpoints were established.

6. ISAF also continued to provide a variety of security assistance tasks in a low-key manner, including support for the pilgrimage operation to Mecca involving nearly 12,000 pilgrims and provision of additional security, such as checks for explosive ordnance, prior to and during international conferences, fairs and visits by senior statesmen.

7. ISAF found and confiscated a significant amount of weapons and ammunition during the reporting period, including rockets, unexploded ordnance and air defence systems. As of 10 February, ISAF explosive ordnance disposal teams destroyed more than 175,000 unguided missiles, mines and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles.

8. ISAF continued to implement enhanced security measures in the city and raised its presence and visibility, especially in the Bagrami district, where a number of incidents had occurred in the past. A joint command centre was established and

operationalized in the Bagrami district, through the cooperation of ISAF and the Afghan Fifth Division. In sharp contrast to previous times, no serious incidents have since occurred in Bagrami. An ISAF task force was deployed on Shina Hill overlooking the city. ISAF personnel continued to liaise regularly with the observation posts set up by the Kabul Garrison on the edge of the Force's area of responsibility.

9. ISAF continued to enjoy the full confidence of the senior Afghan leadership. The ISAF commanders worked closely with the senior leaders, on the basis of the full harmony between the objectives of ISAF and of the Afghan authorities. The ISAF leadership also maintained close contact with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

10. The Joint Coordinating Body (JCB), set up in accordance with the Military Technical Agreement, met regularly on a fortnightly basis during the reporting period. The JCB meetings, which brought together the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, ISAF, the Afghan Ministers of Defence and of the Interior, the Kabul Garrison and the National Directorate for Security, were conducted in the usual cooperative atmosphere, on the basis of agendas prepared by ISAF. Moreover, ISAF prepared a summary record of each meeting for the use of the participants.

11. The participants deliberated on the general security situation in Kabul, the work of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan and the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The JCB has become a highly effective mechanism for consultation and coordination, contributing to the excellent cooperative relationships which have allowed the stabilization of the situation in Kabul and the provision of a safe and secure environment.

12. In an effort to ensure adequate ministerial protection, the Turkish and Italian units in ISAF provided close protection training for a total of 794 Afghan bodyguards.

13. ISAF continued to address the equipment requirements of the Kabul police and the security personnel serving at the checkpoints on the main routes leading into the city. ISAF is also assisting with the construction and refurbishment work on those sites

14. ISAF sustained its efforts to enhance coordination and intelligence-sharing among the relevant Afghan security entities, especially the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Directorate for Security, the local police and the Kabul Garrison. The Committee for Intelligence Coordination, which was established with that aim in mind, met on a weekly basis during the reporting period and produced tangible results in security coordination. For example, ISAF provided the critical intelligence which led to the apprehension, by the Afghan security entities, of a minibus laden with explosives and fuses on 2 December.

15. ISAF enjoys the full trust and respect of the people of Kabul, who appreciate the Force's contribution to security and stability and its assistance efforts in the local community. There has been no show of hostility on ISAF personnel since 20 June. ISAF troops are under strict instructions to treat the local citizens with courtesy at all times and to respect local customs and values. The Force's sensitivity for the Muslim religious practices during the month of Ramadan was especially appreciated by the local community.

16. ISAF sustained its broad information campaign relating to ISAF operations, government activities and the work of the international community in Kabul through public announcements, radio and television advertisements, posters, the ISAF news sheet and the two ISAF radio stations.

17. The ISAF family was deeply sorrowed by the crash of a German Sikorsky CH-53-type helicopter serving in ISAF on 21 December, killing all seven German personnel on board. A team of experts from the German Flight Safety Agency conducted an investigation into the crash and determined that it had been caused by technical failure. The seven German personnel tragically lost constitute the only ISAF casualties so far.

B. Security in Kabul and its surrounding areas

18. Kabul continued to enjoy vastly improved security during the reporting period. Although the city still carries the visible scars and deprivations of 23 years of war, the atmosphere is calm and peaceful, with a thriving commercial and social life. Crime rates remain low and a full sense of normality has returned. The lifting of the night curfew as of 3 November, for the first time since 1979, has further boosted both the confidence of the Afghan authorities and the optimism of the local community.

19. Students of Kabul University protested the poor living conditions at the university dormitories in demonstrations held on 11 and 12 November. Unfortunately, owing to the overreaction of the largely untrained local police force, two students were shot dead by police and a number of students were wounded. Police chiefs blamed Taliban provocateurs for the demonstrations. The President has appointed a commission to investigate the incidents.

20. A hand-grenade attack on non-ISAF United States personnel on 17 December resulted in two United States personnel being injured; a similar attack took place on 19 December outside the Kabul Multinational Brigade compound, in which the attacker and two Afghans were killed and two French citizens were injured.

21. There were a number of rocket attacks on the city from the hills beyond the Force's area of responsibility. However, the ageing, inaccurate rockets, often with crude firing arrangements, did not cause any casualties or damage to property. Nevertheless, in view of the potential threat, ISAF maintained its vigilant but discreet stance and carried out random searches to prevent further attacks.

22. Taking advantage of the improved security in the city, President Karzai asked ISAF to help the local security entities in tackling ordinary crime in some parts of Kabul, especially in the Barjay and Pagman districts. ISAF assisted the Ministry of the Interior and the National Directorate for Security in identifying a set of additional security measures in that regard and submitted them to President Karzai for approval. The proposals include the timely payment of police and army salaries, staffing on the basis of professional competence and providing for the equipment requirements of the Kabul police, as well as measures designed to rationalize policing practices in those districts, such as the establishment of a separate police district in Barjay.

C. Assistance projects for the local community

23. ISAF continued to implement an extensive programme of assistance to the local community in the reporting period. The CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) programme channels assistance, particularly in the fields of education, health and urban infrastructure, through carefully selected quick-impact projects, taking into account local requirements, humanitarian considerations, respect for cultural and religious values and the principle of equidistance to all the ethnic groups making up the people of Afghanistan.

24. ISAF nations carried out a total of 176 such projects from 20 June 2002 to 10 February 2003. Actual examples include renovation and refurbishment of educational and health establishments (schools, kindergartens, orphanages, hospitals and clinics), provision of electricity transformers for city districts, supply of stationery and teaching materials, provision of equipment and engineering expertise to help with the water supply and sanitation, equipment support to security forces and police, provision of firefighting training and equipment, air traffic control and meteorological training, restoration of mosques, assistance with the water, electricity, library and reproduction facilities of the two universities in Kabul, supply of medical aid both in Kabul and in Turkey in some instances, distribution of baby food and provision of medicines, children's clothing and furniture to charities for the disabled.

25. Although it does not have a common CIMIC fund for its assistance activities, ISAF has endeavoured to utilize its own limited resources to the full in order to respond to the numerous requests for assistance from the local community. ISAF nations finance their projects themselves, with certain financial support from the United States and the European Union.

26. During its term of leadership, Turkey carried out 37 assistance projects, entirely funded from its own resources. Furthermore, Turkey handed over to the Afghan authorities a total of eight buildings which were constructed or renovated for the use of Turkish units in the city. Three such buildings in police districts 6, 7 and 9 were handed over to the Ministry of the Interior on 19 January, along with a number of rifles, pistols, ammunition and a security surveillance camera requested by the Ministry. Turkey also transferred the three buildings constructed by Turkey at the ISAF compound, as well as a renovated building on the same site, to the Ministry of Defence on 20 January, together with a number of pistols and security equipment requested by the Ministry.

III. Specific challenges

27. While not falling within the ISAF core mission, the following specific challenges continue to have implications for security and stability in Kabul and in Afghanistan as a whole.

(a) The Afghan authorities have reached agreement on defence reform and the establishment and training of an Afghan National Army. A detailed plan of action has been decreed. The National Defence Commission has been working on a plan to establish four new corps, with a total of 70,000 men, in place of the 10 current corps. The Commission has also established special committees to supervise work on the collection of weapons belonging to members of the population, current

military forces and local militias, demobilization of excess military personnel and their reintegration into society and the recruitment of officers and soldiers into the national army. The central Government has sought to involve the regional leaders too in that process.

The international community should do all it can to support the implementation of the difficult process of demobilizing former combatants and integrating parts of the personal armed forces of the regional leaders into a coherent and efficient army. It is likely to be a costly undertaking, as former combatants often have no prospects for alternative employment and, having spent considerable parts of their lives fighting for their country's independence, expect to be provided with financial support to start a new life. Greater international help in support of the efforts of Japan in demobilization and reintegration and of the United States and France in training the new battalions of the Afghan National Army would contribute to the success of that critical undertaking.

(b) The central Government has sustained its efforts to extend its control over the entire country and to achieve a broad-based national consensus among all the ethnic groups and leading political elements. The twin processes of adopting a new constitution by the end of 2003 and the holding of free and fair elections in mid-2004 are critical stages in the consolidation of the country's stability and its return to normality. Those processes therefore merit continued international attention and support.

(c) Kabul may face another flow of refugee returns starting in the spring. Neighbouring countries seem to be keen to resume the repatriation of refugees as soon as the winter months are over. Such a flow, coupled with the continuing inability of the Afghan authorities to provide for the essential requirements of the returnees, may have implications for Kabul's stability and cause an increase in ordinary crime. While the UNAMA Winterization Task Force has been implementing a coordinated programme of action to help returnees and vulnerable families cope with winter conditions, there is still concern for the plight of approximately 600,000 refugees who have returned to Kabul. ISAF has been supporting the activities of the Task Force to the extent of its abilities.

IV. Conclusion

28. ISAF continued to provide substantial assistance, during the reporting period, to the Afghan authorities in maintaining security and stability in Kabul and its surrounding areas. The situation in the city is calm and peaceful. The conditions are ripe for the consolidation of the current stable circumstances and for the provision of a degree of material prosperity which would help preclude a return to extremist ideologies and religious polarization in the country. However, that is dependent upon the sustenance and enhancement of international assistance. The Afghan people should be encouraged to join hands to achieve a lasting peace and to safeguard their national unity.

29. The Turkish leadership is particularly pleased to note that adequate force protection measures have been taken to ensure the safety and security of all ISAF personnel, that no acts of hostility have been committed against ISAF troops and that ISAF has suffered no injuries or fatalities as a result of hostile acts.

30. The Turkish term as the ISAF lead nation will come to an end on 10 February when the joint German-Dutch leadership is scheduled to take over the ISAF command. The Turkish leadership avails itself of this opportunity to wish the new leadership a successful term and to thank the international community and the ISAF troop-contributing nations for their kind support.

Hilmi Akin **Zorlu**
Major General, TUA
ISAF Commander